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SUBJECT: UKRAINE: OLD FACES, PRACTICES RETURN TO MINISTRY  
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[D. 05 KIEV 1794](#)

Classified By: Ambassador, reason 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Since the ouster of outspoken "orange" Interior Minister Yuri Lutsenko December 1 and the appointment of compliant Vasyl Tsushko in his place, some old faces and practices from the pre-Orange Revolution era have returned to the Ministry and police. Of note were the appointments, as deputy Interior Ministers, of Serhiy Popkov, the Commander of Interior Forces in November 2004, who mobilized troops in the middle of the night for a potential crackdown on Maidan demonstrators, and Mykola Plekhanov, the ex-Sumy police chief who ordered police to beat up student activists in August 2004, an event which sparked civic outrage and fueled the movement leading into the Orange Revolution. Past practices which were largely in abeyance during Lutsenko's tenure but appear to have returned in the past two months include mandatory payments to serve in high police posts, regular payments to superiors, and a proposal to resume on-the-spot payment of traffic fines. Still unclear--and important--is the role newly appointed deputy PM Volodymyr Radchenko will play in overseeing law enforcement and security structures.

[1](#)2. (C) Comment: Radchenko told the Ambassador January 31 that one of his top priorities in law enforcement would be promoting anti-corruption activities, but it is too early to know what kind of impact he might have. His appointment, personnel shifts at the Ministry of Interior, and recent comments made to us by the Border Guards make clear that the PM/Cabinet now influence the Ministry/police more than the President, as had been the case as long as Lutsenko was in place. Personnel changes were inevitable; still unclear is the overall direction of Ministry policy under the new leadership and the commitment of the PM's team to law enforcement reform. End Summary and Comment.

Changing of the guard: first at the Ministry...

[1](#)3. (C) The turnover in Interior Ministry management from the team which arrived in February 2005 after the Orange Revolution and remained after Yanukovych's August 2006 appointment as PM started in Lutsenko's waning weeks. Lutsenko told Ambassador in November that Yanukovych and chief Regions' financier Rinat Akhmetov had pressured him to allow them to propose candidates for provincial police chiefs, particularly in eastern Ukraine. Lutsenko said that he had refused but had offered Regions the First Deputy Minister slot as a compromise (note: the former First Deputy Minister, Oleksandr Bondarenko, a perceived ally of Our Ukraine heavyweight Petro Poroshenko, died unexpectedly September 2). Named to replace Bondarenko in early October

was Major General Ihor Bilozub, most recently chief of security services for Akhmetov's Systems Capital Management (SCM) empire, and prior to the Orange Revolution the longtime First Deputy Chief of the Donetsk provincial police in charge of combating organized crime (2000-2004).

¶4. (C) Once Lutsenko was ousted December 1 (ref B), more extensive changes followed. Lutsenko's replacement, the genial Socialist Vasyl Tsushko, known for his willingness to take orders and not make waves (ref D), soon announced a series of personnel changes which returned figures associated with either Donetsk, Regions base, or other Kuchma-era figures, to office. Most notable in the initial December appointments was Mykola Plekhanov (deputy Minister for Human Resources and Internal Security). Plekhanov, who had served as a law enforcement adviser to PM Yanukovych since August 2006, is best known as a former Sumy oblast police chief and close associate of former Sumy governor Volodymyr Shcherban (ref C). In August 2004, at Shcherban's direction, Plekhanov ordered Sumy police to use violence in breaking up a student march on the road to Kyiv, an incident which sparked outrage, helped fuel the PORA! student movement which acted as the vanguard for the Orange Revolution, and was mentioned in the 2004 Human Rights Report. Plekhanov was also implicated, though never charged, in using the Sumy police to commit election fraud and pressure on election commissioners and observers during the 2004 election.

¶5. (SBU) Two other deputy ministers appointed December 13 were: Mykola Krupiansky as Chief of the Criminal Police (Krupiansky had worked for Bilozub from 2000-2004 in the Donetsk division for combating organized crime); and Vasyl Marmazov, in charge of legal issues (Marmazov is a former Communist Rada MP and a close ally of communist leader Petro

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Symonenko).

¶6. (SBU) On January 11, Tsushko appointed General Serhiy Popkov as deputy Interior Minister; Popkov served as Commander of the Interior Ministry's ground forces from 2001-04 and, at the height of the Orange Revolution, issued orders, subsequently rescinded, for Interior Troops to deploy in the middle of the night of November 27, 2004 to clear the Maidan of protesters (Popkov subsequently claimed the deployment was a no-notice exercise; he issued the rescind order after other security force commanders, including Military Intelligence Chief Halaka, called to warn Popkov they would counter the deployment).

¶7. (C) First Deputy Defense Minister Leonid Polyakov told us January 12 that he considered Popkov's appointment to contravene Yushchenko's decree on Ministry of Interior appointments and that he would resign before being forced to sit next to Popkov at a cabinet meeting, adding: "Having to sit next to (recently appointed Emergencies Minister) Shufrych in Cabinet meetings is bad enough." (Note: Shufrych gained notoriety October 23, 2004 by running over several Yushchenko supporters in his Mercedes SUV at an election rally and brawling with Yushchenko and his lieutenants later that night inside the Central Election Commission after thugs assaulted Yushchenko supporters outside. End note). Polyakov characterized Shufrych and Popkov's appointments as clear signals by Regions to government and police personnel that Regions rewarded loyalty and would take care of those who carried out their orders.

...then in the police...

¶8. (SBU) Tsushko next turned his attention to oblast police chiefs, according to the press, summoning them all to a January 18 meeting in which he suggested that most of them should consider resigning. After none did so voluntarily, Tsushko replaced 12 (of 26 nationwide) January 25. Of note

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was new Kyiv police chief Oleksiy Krykun, former Dnipropetrovsk oblast chief and Chief of Police Supervision in Kuchma's Presidential Administration. Media reports linked Krykun not only to Kuchma but to former Interior Minister Bilokon (in Moscow since the Orange Revolution avoiding an arrest warrant), as well as Kuchma Chief of Staff Medvedchuk. During the 2004 Presidential elections, Krykun reportedly ordered the confiscation of a million copies of the "Vecherniye vesti" newspaper owned by Tymoshenko which contained Yushchenko campaign materials. Krykun has also been linked in the press to Russian organized crime-linked businessman Maksim Kurochkin, currently in Ukrainian detention on extortion charges related to Crimean land deals; in 2003, several media outlets accused Krykun of aiding Kurochkin in an ownership dispute over Dnipropetrovsk's "Ozerka" open-air market, one of Ukraine's largest and most lucrative.

¶9. (SBU) Other notable provincial police chief appointments made January 25 included: Vasyl Biryukov in Crimea (Biryukov worked in the Donetsk Combating Organized Crime division in the 1990s with Bilozub); Myhailo Tsymbalyuk in Lviv (Tsymbalyuk was Kuchma's Ternopil governor in 2004, dismissed after the Orange Revolution); and Valeriy Nonik in Chernihiv (Nonik served as provincial police chief in Kirovohrad and Zhytomyr in 2003-04).

¶10. (C) Note: Lutsenko told Ambassador November 18, in the middle of the campaign to oust him, that four reasons kept him battling to stay in place as long as possible. He specifically cited success in foiling recent efforts by Kurochkin to re seize control of the "Ozerka" market as an example of preventing the police from overtly interfering in business or being used as a tool in business disputes. His other three rationales were to: prevent the wide-scale return of criminal schemes within the police force itself, like car smuggling rings; prevent the police from pressuring the political process (as in 2004, absent in 2006); and protect the police "and by extension the people" from a return to old habits for as long as he could.

...and a reversion to old practices?

¶11. (SBU) Anecdotal evidence suggests some of those old habits may have returned since Lutsenko's ouster. The family friend of an embassy LE staffer claimed that he will soon lose his relatively high-ranking police post because he could not afford to pay the "price" assigned to the position. He alleged that the new team had set mandatory payments for all high and medium positions. He also said that the previous practice of subordinates being forced to pass a certain sum

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of money to superiors had also resumed, after being in abeyance since Lutsenko's appointment in February 2005.

¶12. (SBU) Oleksiy Kalinsky, the newly appointed Chief of the Vehicle Inspection Department (DAI) lent some credence to such claims in his comments to the press after his January 24 appointment. Kalinsky said that he favored the restoration of the DAI structure which existed prior to recent reforms (Lutsenko had combined the DAI with the foot patrol in an effort to reduct corruption). He also proposed restoring the previous DAI right to demand on-the-spot payment of traffic fines, as well as an increase in the average amount of fines for breaking traffic rules (note: "DAI" is an unintentionally appropriate acronym, since it is also the imperative form of the verb "to give," the gruff request of the traffic police for roadside payments to avoid larger fines. Yushchenko tried to abolish the DAI in August 2005 as a populist way of reducing corruption, with plans to replace it with a more modern highway patrol force but faced traffic safety issues in the interim. DAI presence on Ukrainian roads gradually increased throughout 2006. end note)

## Will Radchenko Make a Difference?

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¶13. (C) The January appointment of Volodymyr Radchenko to a newly-created Deputy Prime Minister position signals increased attention from PM Yanukovych to law enforcement structures and reforms, long a priority area for President Yushchenko. Radchenko, who has held leadership roles in the NSDC, SBU, and the Interior Ministry, has the experience and authority to promote change and is getting cautiously optimistic reviews from a number of reformers who work closely with the Embassy on our assistance programs. At a January 31 meeting with the Ambassador, Radchenko emphasized the importance he places on modernizing law enforcement organs and practices to bring them into line with European norms. He told the Ambassador that he had ordered all key law enforcement agencies, specifically naming the SBU, Interior Ministry, Border Guards, and the Tax Administration, to provide within one month their current anti-corruption programs and policies. At that point, Radchenko said that he will be in a better position to move forward. He also noted that another priority would be to oversee the functioning of UkrSpetsExport (state arms exporter) and the honoring of Ukrainian obligations to enforce export controls.

¶14. (C) Radchenko said that he had great faith in younger, western-oriented reformers leading the process of modernizing Ukrainian law enforcement. In particular, he pointed to Acting SBU head Naliyavachenko as an example of a western-oriented, progressive thinker who is doing good work in pushing ahead SBU reform. Radchenko noted that he would work closely with NSDC Secretary Haiduk, and his presumed deputy, former SBU head Drizchany, on reform. He also said that he had talked to Presidential Administration Head Baloha and even met with President Yushchenko to ensure that CabMin and presidential team efforts were coordinated. In Radchenko's view, the MCC Threshold program could do a great deal to support the Government's anti-corruption work.

¶15. (C) Comment. Radchenko presented himself as a professional, dedicated to solving problems and getting results as he promotes reform in the law enforcement sector. With one exception, a mini-tirade about the dangers of former Interior Minister Lutsenko, whom he called corrupt and a drunk, using his new civic movement to change the government undemocratically, Radchenko focused on anti-corruption and the importance of reform. What remains to be seen is whether he and the CabMin will simply stay focused on high policy in general or also wade in to reverse the trend at the Interior Ministry described above. End Comment.

¶16. (U) Visit Embassy Kyiv's classified website:  
[www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kiev](http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kiev).  
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